

6.5 Effects of the Second World War

Conceptual understanding

Key questions

- How did the end of the Second World War compare to the end of the First World War?
- To what extent did the Allies hold the Axis Powers responsible for the conduct of the war?
- To what extent did the global influence of Europe change as a result of the war?

Key concepts

- Continuity
- Change

Immediate effects

Taken as a whole, the European, North African and Pacific theatres were won by the USSR and the United States. They emerged as the two global superpowers. If this is the case it means that the war in Europe was not won by a European power insofar as the Soviet Union had been isolated from the events in the rest of Europe for the majority of the inter-war period. The course of European history in the post-war era would be governed by this fact.

The effects of a war so vast in scope are impossible to detail. The devastation was complete – human, cultural, economic; all aspects of European civilization was clubbed by the war. Perhaps the most immediate effect of the war was the human cost.

European war dead		
Country	Military deaths	Civilian deaths
Belgium	12 100	74 000
Czechoslovakia	25 000	320 000
France	217 600	350 000
Germany	5 533 000	1 067 000–3 267 000
Great Britain	383 600	67 100
Netherlands	17 000	284 000
Norway	3 000	6 500
Poland	240 000	5 360 000
USSR	8 800 000–10 700 000	15 200 000–13 300 000

Source: "By the Numbers: World Wide Deaths", *The National World War II Museum* <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/world-wide-deaths.html>

The damage to the cultural heritage of the continent was immense. Aerial bombing devastated the architecture of cities across the continent. Warsaw endured the destruction of much of its centuries-old buildings at its city centre. German cities such as Dresden were burned out. The 120 hectares of the city centre of the cathedral city of Cologne were leveled in a single air raid while the cathedral itself remained standing, although heavily damaged by several direct hits. The city would suffer over 200 air raids during the war. While St Paul's Cathedral in London, Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece, survived the war with limited damage, Coventry Cathedral was not so lucky, burning after being hit by incendiary bombs during the Blitz in 1940. Florence lost all but one of her storied bridges, demolished by the retreating German army. It was just this type of damage that prompted first the Danish and then French authorities to surrender their capitals before they could be devastated from above.

Cultural institutions in many European cities went to extraordinary lengths to shelter collections from destruction and hide them from theft. In the weeks before the German invasion, curators from the Louvre and other French museums moved their collections to secret locations in the countryside. British Museum holdings were stashed in remote parts of Wales. This did not, however, save countless works in central and eastern Europe. In addition to the works of art destroyed, either as collateral damage or deliberately destroyed by the war, many thousands more were pilfered by occupying German forces. Add to these pieces of art those that had been systematically stolen by high-ranking Nazis during the seven years before the war began and the cultural devastation of the war broadens immeasurably.

Recovery

One of the many lessons that came out of the flawed settlement to the First World War was the realization that Europe could not be left on its own to recover. The destruction of infrastructure, urban areas and industrial centres was far more widespread than it had been in 1918. The political instability of the inter-war period was seen by many as a product of the weak global economy of the 1920s and 1930s. As early as 1944 at Bretton Woods the Allied leaders planned to re-establish trade and sound currencies as soon as hostilities ceased. The western Allies understood that the global economy depended upon as timely a recovery as possible in Europe, but they also wanted to avoid any long-term dependence on the US economy. The stock market crash of 1929 had proved the folly of that. Nevertheless the US economy emerged from the war, as it had in 1918, as the dominant economy on the globe. It held two-thirds of the world's gold supply and produced over 60% of the world's industrial output. In the immediate post-war period, direct aid in the form of food, fuel and loans poured from the US into western Europe. By 1947 the European economy had regained much of its lost industrial capacity, but the extent to which it could be self-sustaining was in doubt.

It was to answer this pressing issue and to remove central economic planning or economic nationalism as a potential answer to any resulting economic despair in Europe that the US announced the Marshall Plan

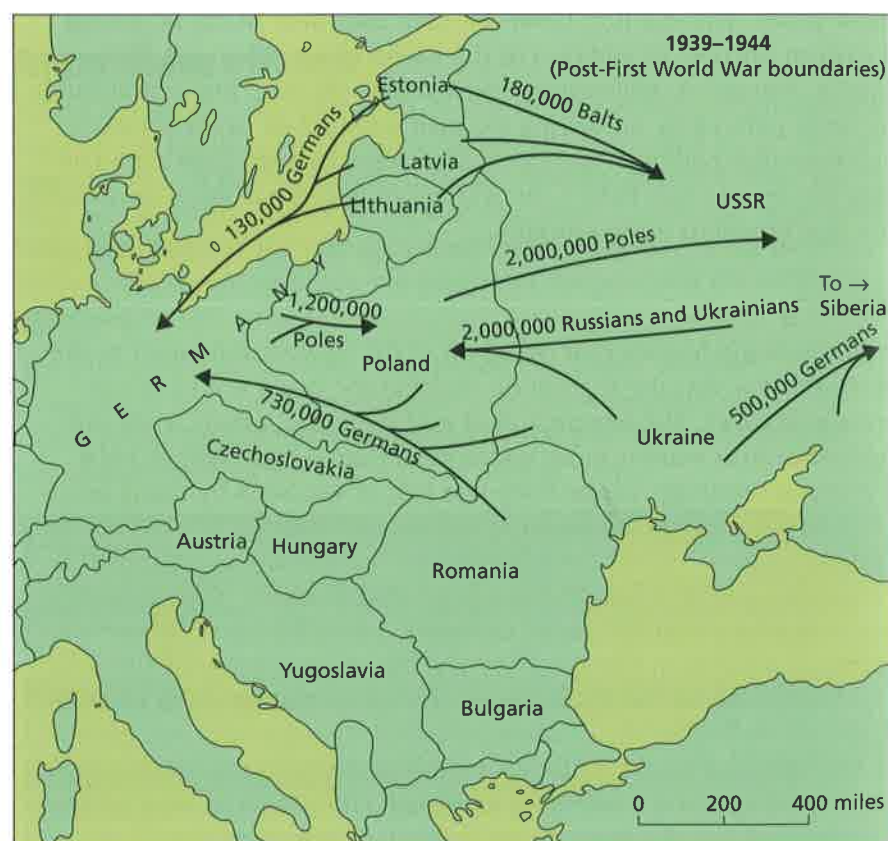
in 1947. Aid credits allowing for the improvement of infrastructure and free trade, a condition of Marshall Aid, made recovery more efficient. The United States' economy also benefitted as wartime demand was replaced with European recovery demand. The plan exacerbated deteriorating US/Soviet relations and was a major accelerant in the Cold War.

ATL Research and communication skills

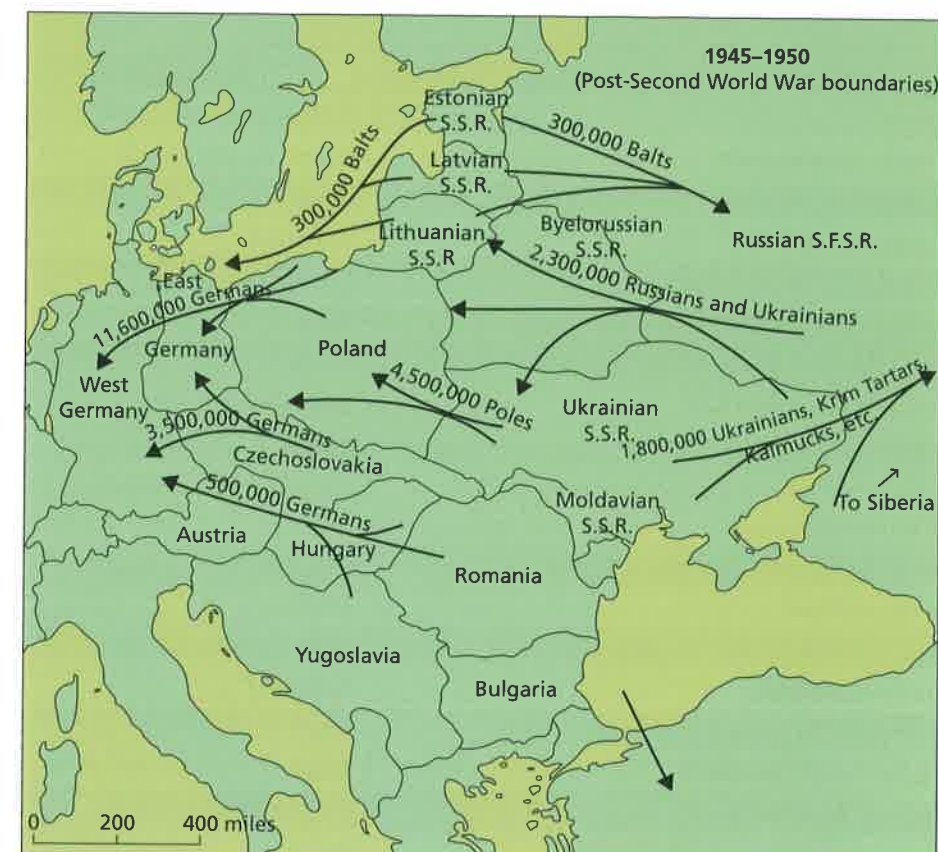
Choose one of the following cities and research the steps taken to rebuild it after the Second World War. What was the extent of the damage? How were historic buildings restored? Were any buildings left as they were? How did the countries pay for the restoration and rebuilding of their cities?

- London • Berlin • Hiroshima
- Warsaw • Dresden • Tokyo
- Cologne • Shanghai • Nagasaki

Illustrate your findings with photographs and present your research to your classmates.



▲ European population migration, 1939–1944. How do you account for the migration patterns in the map?



320 000 Jews to Israel (1945–1950)
120 000 from Poland
91 000 from Romania
37 000 from Bulgaria
33 000 from Turkey
22 000 from Czechoslovakia
17 000 from Hungary

▲ Post-war European population migration. What effect would this migration have on the opening years of the Cold War?

War crimes

Allied leaders had discussed the issue of holding the German leadership responsible for both the start and the conduct of the war on several occasions. Once Stalin's suggestion of summary execution had been dismissed, it was decided on a tribunal approach in which representatives of the four occupying powers would sit in judgment of the accused. The accused, both individuals as well as collectives such as the SS, were charged with one or more of the following:

- planning an aggressive war
- carrying out an aggressive war
- war crimes
- crimes against humanity.

The main trials were held in Nuremberg, but others were also held around Germany as well as in combatant countries such as France, Belgium and Canada.

The trials continued into 1949, although mostly under the auspices of the United States. The political will to continue the trials dissipated as the Cold War intensified. The trials had never been popular in Germany and with an increasingly aggressive Soviet Union, the United States determined that they needed the support of West Germans more than they needed the convictions of by then minor Nazi officials.



▲ Herman Goering looking bored at his trial for war crimes. What arguments did the accused use in their defence?

War crimes verdicts		
Name	Position	Sentence
Karl Dönitz	Admiral	10 years imprisonment
Wilhelm Frick	Minister of the Interior	Death
Hans Frank	Governor-General of occupied Poland	Death
Hans Fritzsche	Propaganda official	Acquitted
Walther Funk	Minister of Economic Affairs	Life imprisonment
Herman Goering	Commander of the Luftwaffe and Deputy Führer	Death
Alfred Jodl	Chief of German Armed Forces Operations Staff	Death
Rudolph Hess	Deputy Führer until 1941	Life imprisonment
Wilhelm Keitel	Chief of Armed Forces	Death
Kostantin von Neurath	Foreign Minister and later Governor of occupied Bohemia and Moravia	15 years imprisonment
Franz von Papen	Vice chancellor and later Nazi official in Turkey	Acquitted
Joachim von Ribbentrop	Foreign minister	Death
Erich Raeder	Commander-in-Chief of the navy	Life imprisonment
Hjalmar Schacht	Economic minister	Acquitted
Alfred Rosenberg	Minister for the Eastern Territories	Death
Martin Bormann	Head of Party Chancellery	Death
Baldur von Schirach	Leader of the Hitler Youth	20 years imprisonment
Arthur Seys-Inquart	<i>Reichskommissar</i> for the Netherlands	Death
Albert Speer	Architect and Minister of Armaments	20 years imprisonment
Julius Streicher	Editor of anti-Semitic magazine <i>Der Stürmer</i>	Death

Long-term effects

The Cold War

The Grand Alliance came together for the singular purpose of defeating the Axis Powers. A common enemy was the one thing that held it together. In terms of core values or a shared worldview, the Soviet Union and the United States had nothing in common prior to the United States entering the war against Germany. As the defeat of Germany drew closer the differences between the Allies once again came to the fore. Did the Second World War cause the Cold War? That is far too simplistic. There were, however, aspects of the course of the war that made the Cold War more likely.

- The devastation that the war had visited on the Soviet Union provoked Stalin to take reparations.
- The German invasion of the Soviet Union caused Stalin to look for security in eastern Europe.
- Stalin interpreted the policy of appeasement as an anti-Soviet policy.
- The US decision to not share nuclear weapon technology with the Allies led to a sense of mistrust and competition.



- Stalin chose to interpret the delays in Operation Overlord as deliberate.
- During the wartime conferences difficult questions regarding the post-war settlement were postponed.

There is little doubt that, in part, the origins of the Cold War lay in the conduct of the Second World War. Nevertheless there were other causes. Ideological differences predated the war, as did a mutual misunderstanding and ignorance of values, goals and motives.

ATL Research and communication skills

Research the role that women played in the war effort of the major combatants. Use the information you discover to create an argument for greater equality for women in the post-war years. Express your argument in one of the following formats:

- Pamphlet
- Speech
- Web page
- Video
- Presentation software

The United Nations

It is a testament to the Allied leaders' vision that they did not view the League of Nations as a failed experiment in collective security and international cooperation. It was understood that the absence of some of the major powers was an important impediment to its operations. On the other hand, why would the Great Powers join if their vote counted the same as smaller powers? Still, it was understood by most that the new organization could not simply be another way for the powers to dominate the room. A balance had to be found. This balance was the Security Council. The veto provided to the four powers in the Security Council persuaded them that their role and influence would be respected. The General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations (UN), which operated under the principle of one country one vote, gave a voice to the less powerful states.

Decolonization

This was the second war in a generation to devastate the European imperial powers. The British and French empires had endured the First World War intact, but weakened. Canada and the other dominions had used their contributions to the victory to gain more autonomy and India and other colonies began to expect similar treatment. In the aftermath of the Second World War India's cries for independence could no longer be ignored by the weakened British and the Algerians accelerated their agitation for independence. Ho Chi Minh spent the war fighting the Japanese with his guerrilla force and drafted a declaration of independence once the Japanese surrendered to the United States. By weakening the old colonial powers to the extent that they could no longer maintain their empires, the Second World War contributed to the wave of decolonization that swept Africa and Asia in the post-war period.



▲ The devastated city of Hiroshima after the dropping of the atomic bomb. Were there viable alternatives to dropping the bombs?

Technology and war: nuclear weapons

In October 1939 President Roosevelt received a letter signed by Albert Einstein, Eugene Wigner and Leo Szilard, all eminent physicists. They alerted the President to the possibility of using nuclear fission to create a weapon and that the expertise to do so was present in Germany. In fact all of the major combatants, the USSR, Britain, Japan and Germany, had teams exploring the creation of nuclear weapons. Nuclear fission was first achieved in Germany in 1938. In an effort to stymie this effort the Allies helped remove Norway's stocks of heavy water, necessary for managing the reaction, before the German invasion of March 1940.

Once the US was at war, the task of developing a nuclear weapon in the US was turned over to the Army Corps of Engineers. General Leslie Groves assembled a team of physicists who were eventually concentrated at Los Alamos, New Mexico. While the project as a whole was

under the control of the army, the scientific activity was conducted primarily by civilians headed by the physicist Robert Oppenheimer. Security was incredibly strict, but this did not stop the Soviets from placing a spy, the physicist Hans Fuchs, deep within the project. Facilities were created in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Hanford, Washington to manufacture the material required for the explosion. Columbia University, Berkeley and the University of Chicago all conducted research as part of the Manhattan Project. Eventually two types of weapon were developed, one using uranium 235 and the other using plutonium. The uranium bomb was detonated by firing a radioactive piece at the critical mass of uranium. Using TNT to implode on the fissionable material detonated the plutonium bomb.

In the summer of 1945 the team assembled a tower at the test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico from which to drop a prototype of the plutonium bomb.

7.5 Effects of the Second World War on the Pacific

Conceptual understanding

Key questions

- What practical issues did the Allies face in the wake of Japan's defeat?
- What role did the dropping of the atomic bombs have on the post-war situation?

Key concepts

- Continuity
- Change

Democratization of Japan and US occupation

Unlike Germany, Japan was defeated primarily by the United States and thus its occupation fell to the US and its appointed governor General MacArthur. The US goals for Japan were to see it develop as a liberal democracy with an economy based on free market principles. Specifically the terms of the occupation were:

- punishment of war criminals
- disbanding the military and disarmament
- a ban on former military officers from holding political office
- disbanding the large corporations called "zaibatsu"
- the emperor had to renounce his divinity and accept a figurehead role in government
- land reform that broke up large holdings in favour of smallhold tenants
- the US was permitted to maintain military bases on Okinawa and in Japan.

Between 1945 and 1950 US aid poured into Japan, but it was not until the heightened spending of the Korean War and Japan's resulting strategic location that the capital required for economic take off really flowed into the country. In 1952 the US occupation of Japan formally ended although the terms of the peace did not and Japan remained a demilitarized parliamentary democracy with a flourishing market economy.

Cold War

The US was the sole occupying power in Japan and thus the rehabilitation and political direction of the country was largely determined by the US. Japanese imperial holdings, however, were divided among the Allied Powers including China, which received Taiwan. The USSR took control of the north half of Korea, Sakhalin

Island and the Kurile Islands. Britain recovered control of Hong Kong. Outside of the home islands the United States took control of the south half of Korea below the 38th parallel, and assorted smaller islands.

The Soviet Union had honoured the pledge it made at Yalta to enter the war with Japan. Its declaration and simultaneous invasion of Mongolia happened on 7 August 1945, the day after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The two events are related. Part of the decision to drop the bomb had hinged on the US reluctance to accept Soviet help in defeating Japan and with it a share in the occupation. Stalin certainly saw the bombing as an effort to keep the Soviets out of the conflict. This might also explain the precipitous dropping of the second bomb. An earlier occupation plan had divided Japan much as Germany had been divided, but this was when Allied help seemed essential to defeat Japan with conventional arms. With the advent of the atomic bomb, the US no longer need its allies' help. Britain and China were in no position economically to occupy Japan, especially given Britain's occupation responsibilities in Germany. Likewise France had no appetite for the occupation of Japan. This left the Soviets. Truman's growing distrust of Stalin and his policies precluded them, in Truman's mind, from any place in the peace they had not earned by force of arms.

The US occupation of Japan provided an important base for US and United Nations (UN) operations during the Korean War. In fact, the escalation of the Cold War that came with the Korean War accelerated the rehabilitation of both Japan and West Germany.

Imperialism and decolonization

The cost of the Second World War in both Europe and the Pacific reduced Britain and France to second-rate powers, eclipsed by the two global superpowers in military strength, economic power and political influence. Yet both France and Britain still had, or had recently regained, global empires. The events of 1940–1942 illustrated to the British the difficulty in trying to defend such geographically scattered holdings. When this difficulty was combined with the cost of the war and the ascendance of Clement Attlee's Labour government in 1945, there grew in Britain a political will to begin contemplating the independence of some colonial holdings such as India. Eventually the Allied commander responsible for western Asia during the war, Lord Louis Mountbatten, would be dispatched to negotiate the independence of British India. Other British colonial holdings such as Hong Kong reverted to the British. The Philippines became independent in July 1946.

The war's effect on French colonial holdings in Asia proceeded differently. Because of the nature of the war's end in Asia, coming as it did with two nuclear explosions, a large number of active Japanese army units were still in the field and there had been no provisions made for their surrender. The result was a haphazard demobilization of the Japanese army. In Manchuria some surrendered to the Soviet Red Army after a brief but vicious fight in which the Soviets lost 8,000 and the Japanese 40 000 dead, their weapons being left for Jiang Jieshi's nationalist forces rather than Mao's communist fighters in some cases. The Chinese Civil War would erupt again after the interruption of the

Second World War. The Soviets also occupied the Kurile Islands. In Indo-China units surrendered to undermined British units who in turn used the Japanese forces to maintain order. Unlike the British in India, and much to the annoyance of Ho Chi Minh, who had seized portions of northern Indo-China, the French assumed they would regain control of Indo-China and resume its imperial activities as it had in the pre-war years and this led to nine years of revolutionary warfare between the Viet Minh and French forces.

Thinking skills

Complete the following table comparing the war in the Pacific with the war in North Africa and Europe. Once you have done that develop two generalizations about the nature of warfare in the Second World War.

Importance of ...	Europe and North Africa	Pacific
Naval power		
Air power		
Land forces		
Technology		
Generalization 1:		
Generalization 2:		

Source skills

The Franck Report

The following is from the summary section of the Report of the Committee on Political and Social Problems, Manhattan Project "Metallurgical Laboratory", University of Chicago, 11 June 1945 (The Franck Report).

Members of the Committee:

James Franck (Chairman)
Donald J Hughes
JJ Nickson
Eugene Rabinowitch
Glenn T Seaborg
JC Stearns
Leo Szilard

Nuclear bombs cannot possibly remain a "secret weapon" at the exclusive disposal of this country, for more than a few years. The scientific facts on which their construction is based are well known to scientists of other countries. Unless an effective international control of nuclear explosives is instituted, a race of nuclear armaments is certain to ensue following the

first revelation of our possession of nuclear weapons to the world. Within ten years other countries may have nuclear bombs, each of which, weighing less than a ton, could destroy an urban area of more than five square miles. In the war to which such an armaments race is likely to lead, the United States, with its agglomeration of population and industry in comparatively few metropolitan districts, will be at a disadvantage compared to the nations whose population and industry are scattered over large areas.

Questions

- 1 What do the authors mean by "an armaments race"?
- 2 What does this source tell us about the relationship of science and international relations?
- 3 With reference to its origin, purpose and content, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the source for historians studying the US decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan in 1945?